THE FIRST TEN YEARS OF THE CANADIAN DOMINION

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On the first of July last the Dominion of Canada entered on the second decade of its existence. A natural opportunity is thus presented for reviewing its brief history, and the success of its effort to solve the political problems to the pressure of which it owed its origin. Such a review will be found to be not without interest to the student of political science, especially in England, for Canada exhibits the British Constitution under a peculiar set of circumstances, by which its operation is modified in a way that is at once interesting and important. Even before the formation of the Dominion the Canadian colonies had excited interest among British statesmen by successfully grappling with some problems, like that of a State Church, which formed a burden rather than an advantage of the inheritance received from the mother country; but since the confederation of the colonies, ten years ago, their political transactions have risen in imperial significance. The neighborhood of Canada to the United States, and the intimate commercial and social relations which that neighborhood ails, have already brought, and mu. ntinue to bring, the affairs of the Do. ion before the Imperial Government in a way that is sometimes more important than pleasant; while, among themselves, the Canadians are now facing the storm and stress of conflicts which, even in the varied political history of England, have not been completely fought out, and may therefore be forced upon her yet.

It may not be unnecessary to remind some readers that, previously to 1867, the British American provinces stood to each other practically in the relation of foreign countries. Governed by wholly independent legislatures, separated by dissimilar tariffs, they were united only by the unobtrusive bond of a common

dependence on the Imperial Government of Great Britain. Political thinkers who were liberal enough to be influenced by other considerations than the party questions of the hour, saw that such relations were indisputably hostile to the interest of all the provinces concerned, which could hope for a position of importance on the American continent only by such unrestricted commercial and social intercourse as might ultimately weld them into one people. It was evidently also in the interest of the Imperial Government that the colonial minister in London, instead of being obliged to deal with a number of petty states, should be able to correspond with a single government representative of them all. But the circumstances which led immediately to the confederation of the British American provinces cannot be understood without a brief reference to the previous history of Canada.

When Canada was ceded to Great Britain it was all embraced under one province, extending somewhat indefinitely into the West, and known by the name of the province of Quebec. In 1791 the western section of the province, which had meanwhile been populated by English settlers, was separated into an independent province, with British institutions, while the eastern section continued to retain its original French character. These two provinces, of Upper Canada or Canada West, and Lower Canada or Canada East, remained separate till 1840, when they were united into one province, styled the Province of Canada, in the hope of allaying the political discontent which had culminated in the rebellion of 1837. In this province, down till the period of confederation, ten years ago, politicians had been divided into two parties, one of which was distinguished by the name of *Conservatives*, while their opponents were known as *Liberals* or *Reformers*, though commonly dubbed, in more familiar style, *Clear Grits* in Upper Canada, and *Rouges* among the French of the Lower Province. The history of the struggle between these two parties may be read still with a little more than ordinary human perseverance, but by no human intelligence can it be comprehended. Its incomprehensibility does not indeed arise from the absence of any question sufficient to call the political combatants to arms, for at times there was a measure of solid importance flaunted by one of the parties as a standard round which its forces rallied. But even in such cases it is impossible to see why the measure should have been taken under protection by its advocates rather than by its opponents. The student of the period, whose imagination cannot now be fired by the heat of its burnt-out passions, fails, even after patient investigation, to discover any general principle which uniformly inspired either party, and breathed a soul into the particular measures for which it fought. The rapidly changing administrations of those years show, at this distance, a scene not unlike a well-known juvenile sport, in which boys divide themselves into two sets, for the mere enjoyment of a tug against each other's strength, and, after one set is victorious, divide themselves again and again, till they get worn out. Unfortunately in contests of this kind, bloodless though they be, mere mortals, unlike the ghostly heroes of Walhalla, do at last become exhausted. This exhaustion came all the more naturally upon the combatants in the political arena of Old Canada, owing to the circumstance that for some time neither party was cheered by any decisive victory. In truth, their struggles assumed a serio-comic aspect at times, as one administration after another attempted to carry on the business of the country by a majority which occasionally reduced itself to a unit, and was likely to become a vanishing fraction or a minus quantity whenever a test question was pressed to a decision. Can we wonder that in these circumstances both parties at last laid down their arms in despair, and sought a peaceful settlement of their quarrels?

Looking from our passionless distance at those old conflicts, one may reasonably question whether the political system of the province was not less to blame for their fruitless perpetuation than the incompetence of the polemical politicians by whom they were carried on. But however this may be, the fault of the deadlock between the two parties was charged by the politicians, not on themselves, but on the political arrangement by which the two Canadas were united. As a result of this, a coalition was formed

for the purpose of breaking up the union of the two Canadas, and merging them separately in a larger confederation of the British American provinces. After a considerable amount of preliminary negotiation, matters were sufficiently advanced in 1866 to admit of delegates being appointed from the different provinces to confer on the terms of confederation. The delegates met in London, and the result of their deliberations was the British North America Act, passed by the Imperial Parliament, 29th March, 1867. On the first of July in that year a proclamation of the Queen ushered the young confederacy into existence; and the waste of gunpowder, the destruction of maple branches, the display of dry goods in bunting and fashionable attire, showed it to be a festival on which the Canadians kept high holiday. Since that time the First of July—Dominion Day as it is called—has formed, among the Canadians, a rival to the great holiday of the Fourth among their American neighbors. Whether the day will hold its place or not, who can tell? The explosion of tons of gunpowder in pyrotechnic exhibitions, and *feux de joie*, and salvoes of artillery, will not make the baptism of fire by which a people announces that it has been born into the family of the nations.

At the formation of the confederacy it embraced only four provinces—Upper Canada, under the new name of *Ontario;* Lower Canada, under that of *Quebec;* Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, under their old names. Since then the provinces of Prince Edward Island in the east, and of British Columbia in the west, have joined the Dominion; while the 'Great Lone Land' in the northwest has been acquired by buying up the rights of the Hudson's Bay Company, and already a portion of it set apart as the Province of Manitoba. The whole of British North America is thus included in the Dominion, with the exception of Newfoundland, which thus, literally and figuratively, remains out in the cold. The political constitution of the Dominion, as well as of the seven provinces which now compose it, is in all essential respects a reproduction of the British Constitution. The only exception is in the case of Ontario and Manitoba, the former having from the first contented itself with one legislative chamber, while the latter, for economy's sake, has since followed her example. Recently a proposal has been revived to unite under one provincial government the three maritime provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. It is to be hoped that this proposal may be carried. Neither of these provinces by itself holds the position which its people should be ambitious of attaining in the Dominion; while they entail upon themselves an enormous useless expenditure by supporting three governments, each with a paid lieutenant-governor, a paid cabinet, and two legislative bodies, whose members are paid. As one province, they might cope with Quebec or Ontario; with a single government they would have a large surplus revenue to expend in developing their natural resources; while their legislative chamber or chambers would attain a dignity which is hopeless while they attempt to invest the petty politics of a narrow sphere with the pomp of imperial ceremonies.

Such were the political arrangements with which the Canadians entered on the new attempt to solve the problems of their national life. The political outlook was certainly cheering. The old factions had forgotten their interminable struggles for office, and there seemed to be opened up to them the nobler destiny of working together, and along with their new fellow-countrymen from the other provinces, in building up a great nation along the north of the American continent. This was evidently the interpretation of the position formed by the majority of thinking men throughout Canada, and it was the interpretation on which the Government of the new Dominion began to be formed.

In the selection of a prime minister the governor-general was guided by an equally obvious and just consideration. At the conference of colonial delegates in London, by whom the details of the Confederation Act were arranged, the chair had been occupied by Sir John A. Macdonald, who had long been leader of the Conservative party in the old Province of Canada. The position to which he had thus been raised by his fellow-delegates was a fair indication of the position which he held among the public men of Canada, and the governor-gen-

eral therefore naturally called upon him to assume the duties of the first premier, and to form the first Government of the new Dominion. In the performance of this task Sir John Macdonald acted on the understanding that the coalition out of which the confederation arose would be continued still, in order to overcome any difficulties which might arise in getting the new ship of the State fairly off the stocks. Accordingly he invited prominent Reformers as well as Conservatives to accept office in his cabinet, his intention being that, as far as the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario were concerned, his Government should represent equally both of the old parties. His invitation was accepted by several of the leading men among his old opponents, and there seemed a fair prospect that one great object of the confederation was to be accomplished—that the bells which rang in the first Dominion Day would ring out the 'ancient forms of party strife.'

But the spirit of the old factions died hard. The calm which preceded the birth of the new constitution was but the prelude to a stormful party fight. Some time before, indeed, an incident had occurred of ill omen for the success of the coalition, which was seeking to merge the political differences of the past in a larger sphere of future work. While the coalition was maturing its plans, one of its members, the Hon. George Brown, suddenly resigned his portfolio, without any definite indication of the reason which led him to abandon his colleagues. Mr. Brown had long been a recognized leader of the Reform party, and, therefore, one of the chief opponents of the new premier, Sir John Macdonald. His action necessarily excited a feeling of uneasiness at the time, and seemed to receive its explanation afterwards, when the writs for the first general election were issued, and Mr. Brown explicitly declared the policy he intended to adopt under the altered circumstances of the country.

Sir John Macdonald had succeeded in forming a cabinet fairly representing the parties of the old Province of Canada, as well as the other provinces of the Dominion. To Mr. Brown it was a sufficient objection to the ministry that its head was his old political foe. His friends of the Reform party, who had accepted office, became thereby in his eyes renegades from the cause of Reform; and if any one urged that it was unfair to attack the new administration before its policy was known, the answer was ready, that the only safe government is by parties, and that it would be hazardous to the interests of the new Dominion if its Government were unwatched and unchecked by a regularly organized opposition.

Mr. Brown has had the advantage, during the greater part of his public career, of possessing, as an exponent of his opinions, the most popular newspaper in Canada. About these opinions it is evident that he is thoroughly in earnest: he acts and speaks with the passion of intense conviction. Yet with every allowance for the earnestness of his intentions, and in view of all that his organ had to say in defence of his position at this crisis, we cannot but regard that position as involving a political blunder of the most serious nature. Even from his own point of view, was it legitimate to let the government of the country slip from the hands of his party, to fall under the control of politicians whose principles were worthy of being denounced in the passionate language which he uniformly employs? He had, at the time, not only a right to demand for his party an equal share with his opponents in the administration of public affairs, but he had also an opportunity offered by the premier of asserting that right. To demand that his party should exercise no influence on the business of the country beyond that which proceeds from the opposition benches, when they had the right and power of controlling the Treasury, seemed to many to involve a betrayal, not only of the interests of party, but of the more sacred interests of the whole people.

But the history of the formation of the Dominion was meaningless if Mr. Brown's position was justifiable. By common consent the new confederation was to drown in a flood of wider sympathies the arbitrary landmarks by which the old parties had been separated. Yet here was a proposal that the confederation should start on its young career by instituting a division of parties, which, as the nature of the case implied, was demand-

ed, not by the inevitable antagonism of political measures, but simply for the sake of having a division ; for the only justification of Mr. Brown's position lay in his plea of the absolute indispensability of parties in the good government of a country. Let us speak with the most generous acknowledgment of the benefits which have, necessarily or incidentally, resulted from party government, especially in the history of England and of other free countries. Yet is it not an utterly extravagant estimate of these benefits to look upon the system as forming an essential element in all healthy political action, and to insist therefore on the moral obligation of retaining it under all political conditions? It is surely no universal and eternal law of human life that men can govern themselves only by splitting into hostile cliques, who shall create fictitious causes of quarrel if the natural course of events do not furnish them with real ones. Not once or twice only in the history of the world have all the rival sections of a people coalesced by the irresistible force of their enthusiasm in a common righteous cause ; nor need we despair of such coalitions in the future, when they are demanded by the moral developments of the human race. In such supreme moments of national harmony is it a national duty to detail an unfortunate section of the community to do the work of an *advocatus diaboli*, simply that their client may have his due, and the people be saved from violating the immutable obligation of government by parties? The truth is that government of men by keeping them at hostility with one another, so far from growing in favor with the progress of ethical and political knowledge, is falling into disrepute throughout all spheres of human life ; and the only matter of surprise to the reflecting observer is that the system should have held its ground so long amid that western civilization which for fifteen hundred years has been based on the worship of a Being whose life and death are the perfect type of self-sacrifice for the good of others, and in the service of whom there was to be no longer any difference of Jew and Greek, of bond and free, of male and female, but all the separated sections of men were to become spiritually one. Still it is growing into more general recognition, in theory as well as in practice, that any number of men,—whether the few who join in a commercial enterprize, or the millions who form a nation, or the hundreds of millions who compose the human race—can reach the highest welfare of their external as well as of their internal life by working in harmony rather than at discord with one another. The attempt to establish permanent international relations by means of war ; the attempt to establish the gospel of glory to God, with peace on earth and good will among men, by the mutual antipathies of religious sects ; the attempt to develop the wealth of nations or of individuals by selfish competition ; all such efforts are doomed to abandonment by the higher races, like slavery and other social phenomena of uncivilized life, as belonging to a ruder stage of human progress. It is, therefore, no idle dream of Utopian statesmen which would secure the general welfare of a nation by all parties cooperating as far as possible, and separating into hostile relations only as a last unwelcome necessity, when there is no common course on which they can possibly agree.

This was evidently the view which was taken by the vast majority of Canadians at the first general election for the Dominion parliament. Mr. Brown practically demanded that their political life under the new confederation should be still an endless contest of the parties who had disturbed the old Province of Canada, and the answer to his demand was decided enough. He was himself defeated in the constituency which he had long represented, and the Government entered upon their duties backed by an enormous majority throughout the country as well as in parliament.

The result in itself was one on which the Canadians were to be congratulated ; it was one of the most crushing defeats which the spirit of faction ever received. Yet the policy of Mr. Brown had the effect at which he aimed ; it practically divided the politicians of the country into two factions again. The Government no longer represented the whole people, as it was the intention of the premier that it should—it represented once more a mere party, a party perhaps exasperated by an opposition which

could vindicate its existence by no political reason, and certainly elated by their sweeping victory at the polls. It is not too much to say that the power and the temper of such a Government were a peril to the best interests of the country. In any circumstances the power of the ministry would have been formidable in virtue of their patronage, which is uncontrolled by competitive examinations or any other check on the personal predilections of a minister or the exorbitant expectations of political supporters. But at the formation of the Dominion there were several peculiar circumstances which threw into the hands of the Government an unusual power for obtaining corrupt support; and it was, in fact, the abuse of this power that led to a gradual reaction against them, and to their final overthrow in 1874.

This reaction appeared first in the Province of Ontario, where the tide of political feeling rises to a higher flow, and stretches into larger issues, than in other parts of the Dominion. Here an opposition arose in the provincial legislature, which, though not identifying itself with the position taken by Mr. Brown at the elections, yet received the powerful support of his organ, the 'Globe' newspaper of Toronto. The leader of this opposition was Mr. Edward Blake, Q.C., lately the president of the council in the Dominion Government. Mr. Blake had entered political life only at the first general election for the Dominion. Appearing at first as an independent critic of the course pursued by the Ontario ministry, he conducted his criticisms with such ability, that he was soon recognized by both sides of the House as the most formidable opponent with whom the Government had to contend.

The prime minister of Ontario, on the other hand, was the Hon. John Sandfield Macdonald, who had long been a prominent friend of Mr. Brown among the leaders of the old Reform party. Mr. Macdonald had been selected by his namesake and former opponent, Sir John Macdonald, on the ground that the Province of Ontario would be most fairly represented by an old Reformer, while one of the old Conservatives became premier of Quebec—a province which, under the dominant influence of the Catholic clergy, has generally been Conservative. There is no doubt that Mr. Macdonald intended to guide himself by the principles of reform, and these principles continued, in fact, to direct his administration in many respects, especially in the economy by which it was generally characterized. But his intentions met with a serious obstacle in the inveterate hostility of that party among his old friends which had sided with Mr. Brown, and he was therefore driven to seek assistance from allies from whom it would have been to his advantage if he had held aloof. Accordingly the Government of Ontario, though headed by an old Liberal minister, and representing a decidedly Liberal province, soon began to show tendencies towards a policy in distinct antagonism to the principles of all Liberal government. It was thus in the legislative assembly of Ontario that the new issues of political warfare in Canada first assumed definite shape, and it was here that politicians began to range themselves into new parties.

Any one who watched with earnest eyes the contests in the legislature of Ontario could scarcely fail to see, and to see more clearly from year to year, that here Liberalism had met its old foe in new shapes, and was surely fighting a battle which should not be without an interest to men. We take it that the struggle of Liberal statesmanship in all ages has been to find an effective check by the people upon their executive government; and the foe of Liberalism all along has been the endeavor of political adventurers—be they monarchs, hereditary oligarchies, or cabinets of ministers—to hold themselves above popular control. Under a constitution like that of Canada, and still more under one like the American, it is not difficult to see how a cabinet, by unscrupulous artifices, might attain a position almost as free from responsibility to the people as that of the veriest hereditary despot—a position from which they could be dislodged only by an extraordinary outburst of popular indignation.

One source of enormous power which a Government possesses for securing its position unjustly is to be found in the expenditure on public works. In a new country such expenditure must always be large, and in Canada ten years ago it was unusually increased owing to works

which had to be undertaken by the very terms of the confederation. It is not necessary to explain how favors can be shown to contractors which will call forth their energies when the existence of a Government is imperilled, and open their purses when an electioneering fund is getting exhausted. The hordes of men also employed by large Government contractors can easily be made to feel an interest in the party through whom they have obtained their immediate occupation. But an attempt at corruption of a somewhat novel character was made, especially in the Province of Ontario, by the bribery of entire localities. In the location of national institutions the Government of this province gave it to be understood by unmistakable actions, and even by unmistakable language, that they were guided not so much by a regard for the interests of the people at large as by the intention of rewarding those constituencies which had sent representatives to the right side of the House. This policy culminated in a measure which the Government used its majority to carry in the legislative assembly on the eve of the second provincial election. By this measure one and a half million of dollars were placed absolutely at the disposal of the Government, with the single restriction that it was to be distributed in bonuses to projected railways in different parts of the province.

On several occasions previously the Government had, not without strenuous opposition, obtained smaller grants for various works, without any specifications, and therefore without any reliable estimates. In the case of the large railway grant, though the sum formed part of an accumulated surplus in the provincial treasury, the English reader ought to bear in mind that it represented nearly the whole annual revenue of the province at the time; and this sum was handed over to the Government without any specification as to the particular projects which were to be assisted, and without the roughest estimate of the amount which each might require. In view of the principles by which the Government had given it to be understood that they were guided in the expenditure of public money on different localities, and in view of the fact that nearly every county had some pet railway project on hand at the time, it would not have been surprising if the Government bait had caught every constituency in the province. It is to the credit of the political sentiment of Ontario that the people refused the bait. The opposition had all along protested against the Government asking for large sums while they refused to give the House specific information as to the nature and locality and estimated cost of the works on which the sums were to be expended. It was on this point specially, and with more prominent reference to the large railway grant, that the opposition met the ministerial party at the polls in 1871. We believe that the more dispassionately this crisis comes to be estimated, the more it will be recognized that the very principle of constitutional government was at stake in the election. No plea can be advanced in defence of the ministerial policy which would not equally have justified the ministry in asking for a vote of the entire revenue for each year in a lump sum, without laying any estimates before the House. It has long been a familiar common-place in the politics of constitutional countries, that the legislative body, which represents the people, must be satisfied as to the necessity and expediency of all expenditure in the public service before voting the requisite grants, and that this principle forms the one effective check which the people hold over the men who control the machinery of government. Without this check, the forms of representative government might be relegated among the solemn farces which still impart the dignity of a hollow stateliness to many departments of human action. An administration therefore which acts on the principle of demanding enormous sums, while retaining to itself the unchecked control of their expenditure in detail, is on the fair way to meet the House some day with a preposterous speech from the throne:—

Gentlemen, my ministers have formed careful estimates of the amounts which will be required for their respective departments, and from these estimates I find that the total amount demanded by the exigencies of the public service will be so many millions. It is evidently for the interests of the country that the public service should not be interfered with by men who have not the special acquaintance that my ministers possess with its requirements. I shall therefore simply ask you to vote the total sum which I have

named; and I have the gratification of knowing that you will thus be restored all the sooner to those important private occupations which, I feel assured, must suffer seriously by your prolonged attendance here. You will, of course, draw still the usual sessional allowance.

It was, therefore, no mere cry of a faction which the opposition raised, when they appealed to the electors of Ontario against the policy of the Government, and their appeal was evidently sustained by the voice of the electors at the polls. Feeling confident in the result of the elections, the opposition determined to put the Government on its trial at the very opening of the new legislative assembly. When the address was moved, they proposed an amendment condemning the policy of the ministry in reference to the railway grant, and the amendment was carried by a small majority. The ministry pretended to treat the vote as not implying want of confidence; but an additional vote, with an overwhelming majority, compelled them to abandon the treasury benches with some loss of dignity at last.

The course of political affairs in the Province of Ontario was but an inner circle of the wider course taken by the politics of the Dominion. Here the opposition was led by the present prime minister, the Hon. Alexander Mackenzie. For the first two or three years its feebleness obliged it to content itself with aimless criticism of isolated measures; but by-and-by the ministry began to indicate a policy similar to that which had called forth a victorious opposition in Ontario. It has been observed above that the fundamental safeguard of all constitutional government is that the executive shall be held under as minute and incessant control as the public service will allow, and that the one foe of all constitutional government is the political adventurer who endeavors to hold himself above such control. Legislation may of course render the ambition of such adventurers more difficult, but every system of government is exposed to peril from the unscrupulousness of the men by whom it may be administered. The circumstances of Canada, as of all new countries, form a peculiar source of temptation to corruption in the administration of her Government. From the very nature of the case, a new country cannot possess that leisurely class of men from whom England has long derived her noblest statesmen, and from all that we have observed there seems no immediate prospect of this deficiency being made up in Canada. At least not a few instances have been brought to notice in which the sons of wealthy Canadian merchants have been allowed to content themselves with a disgracefully meagre education, and have squandered, in frivolous idleness or in coarse sensuality, the fortunes which had been laboriously accumulated by industrious parents; while no instance has yet attracted attention in which the leisure derived from hereditary wealth has been devoted to the service of the public in political life. The result of all this is that the administration of public affairs necessarily falls very largely into the hands of professional politicians — of men who enter politics as they would enter any other profession from which they seek to obtain a living. It is no discredit to Canadians in particular, but to human nature in general, to say that only the most incorruptible of men can utterly withstand the temptations of such a profession. At least the sympathy of every earnest political thinker must be repelled by any policy which would render it easier for the professional politician to yield to the temptations of his position.

It was, as we have said, a policy in this direction—a policy of encouragement to the mere political adventurer—that strengthened the opposition to the first Government of the Dominion, and a brief reference to the main points of conflict between the Government and their opponents will suffice to make this evident.

One of the most serious dangers to constitutional government is the power which a cabinet possesses of manipulating the elections so as to put the opposition at a disadvantage throughout the country. This may be done, for example, by spreading the elections over some weeks, taking care to secure the large number of voters who go for the winning side by obtaining at an early date the decision of those constituencies in which the ministry expect a favorable return. The same end is also attained by bringing to the polls the large army of civil servants throughout the country, by leaving the

law practically inoperative against bribery, and by the appointment of returning-officers unscrupulously obsequious to the interests of the party by whom they are appointed. Now, no one who watched impartially the elections for the second parliament of the Dominion could avoid the conviction that the Government had been using their power in all those ways to secure a verdict in their favor at the polls. The elections were brought on in an order which was wholly inexplicable except in the interest of the ministry. Votes were obtained from men whose employment in the service of the nation ought to keep them aloof from the service of a party. In more than one instance a returning-officer sent in a return so manifestly in opposition to the facts, that the Government, out of self-respect, should have at once subjected the offender to criminal prosecution.

But it was mainly by their conduct in reference to the laws against bribery, and by the advantage which they took of the laxity of these laws, that the ministry brought upon themselves their defeat. It had been well enough known to every one in Canada for a long time that representative government was being rendered a laughing-stock by the extent to which bribery was being carried on by all parties. All the evidence on the subject shows that neither party throughout the country could boast of superior freedom from this corruption. Only this can be said of the leaders in the opposition at the time, that they demanded the legislation which has since been obtained, and which has proved a very formidable impediment to bribery and other dishonorable influences at elections. The Government, however, by its overpowering majority in parliament, crushed all attempts at legislation in this direction, and the result was that the second election for the Dominion House of Commons was disgraced by an extensive system of bribery, in which, according to their own confession, the leaders of the Government were deeply involved.

The sources from which the Government obtained funds for bribery were various; but after every allowance for disinterested subscriptions from conscientious supporters, there remain enormous sums, which no statesman should ever have allowed himself to touch, or, if tempted to use, could ever have spoken of afterwards without a feeling of shame. There was even a prevalent suspicion that the public money was being misdirected to electioneering purposes; and though it may be admitted that the suspicion was founded on a mistake, it must also be borne in mind that the premier was himself entirely to blame for giving currency to the suspicion. A motion had been introduced into the House of Commons at Ottawa for a confidential audit of the expenditure on the Secret Service Fund, and the motion was defended by a reference to British practice. The Government, however, succeeded in defeating the motion, and Sir John Macdonald, in vindicating afterwards his opposition to the motion, not content with denying that the demand for a confidential audit was justified by British usage, made the astounding assertion that, if a cabinet in England went out of office with £100,000 of secret service money to their credit, they could employ it in carrying the elections against their opponents. It is somewhat surprising that this statement did not attract attention or call forth any protest from the English press at the time, and that it was only after some years that Sir John Macdonald acknowledged his misapprehension about the practice of British statesmen in reference to the use of Secret Service Funds.

But however well or ill founded may have been the suspicion that the Dominion Government were abusing the public money for party purposes, their own confession places beyond all controversy the notorious attempt to maintain their position by corrupt influences in connection with the projected Pacific Railway through Canadian territory. This scandal received such prominent notice in the English press at the time, and is still so recent, that it is unnecessary to revive its details at present. One or two points of special political importance are all that require to be remembered.

In the first place, the Pacific Railway Bill contained in an aggravated form those unconstitutional features which have been already pointed out in the earlier railway bill of the administration in Ontario. It handed over absolutely to the Government, along with fifty million acres of land, the sum of thirty mil-

lion dollars—a sum fully equal to the public revenue of the whole Dominion for a year and a half; and the people—the House of Commons—were thus left without a voice as to the route which the railway should take, or even the most general details of its construction. In the second place, members of the cabinet confessed to having accepted for electioneering purposes a sum—which in Canada must be accounted very large—from the gentleman who had been promised, or at least expected, the contract for the Pacific Railway, and who has declared that it was no political conviction, but simply the spirit of commercial speculation, that induced him to advance so much money for the purpose of keeping the Government in power. It was a further serious aspect of this political scandal that the Government made an extremely questionable use of its prerogative, and showed a somewhat unseemly contempt of the privileges of parliament, in order to prevent the House of Commons from itself carrying out the investigation on which it had determined.

It was no wonder, therefore, that when at last the ministry met the House, they found the opposition vastly increased in strength, and, after a lengthened debate, resigned without waiting for a division. The new ministry, soon after its formation, dissolved the House, and the appeal to the electors showed that they were sustained by a very powerful element throughout the country. Whether they will retain that support for any length of time, is a question on which, as on other social subjects, it is hazardous to form predictions; but it is a question which is of interest only in so far as the ministry realize the mission which they have undertaken, and to which they owe their position—of fighting the battle of constitutional government in Canada. Certainly nothing has happened which should make the country forget the serious faults of the previous administration; but the temper of political discussion, both in the House of Commons at Ottawa and throughout the Dominion, gives too great reason to fear that politicians are settling again into two factions, separated by no principle except the common conviction of the desirability of being in office. However convenient this state of things may be for the professional politician, it is a result which can be contemplated only with the deepest concern by every earnest student of political affairs. Not only would such a result defeat one great end of the Canadian confederation, but it would give a new force to one of the great perils of popular government. Let us hope that the premier of the Dominion and his associates may prove themselves equal to their mission, and that they may find some safeguard for constitutional freedom against that despotism of party which has formed one of its most powerful foes at all times, and now forms its peculiar foe on the other side of the Atlantic.—*British Quarterly Review.*

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